CIVIL WAR

After Stamford, Connecticut is destroyed during a televised fight between the New Warriors and a group of dangerous villains, public sentiment turns against super heroes. Advocates call for reform, and a Superhuman Registration Act is debated, which would require all those possessing paranormal abilities to register with the government, divulge their true identities to the authorities and submit to training and sanctioning in the manner of federal agents.

One week later, the Act is passed. Any individual with paranormal powers who refuses to register is now a criminal. Some heroes, such as Iron Man, see this as a natural evolution of the role of superhumans in society and a reasonable request. Others view the Act as an assault on their civil liberties. After being called upon to hunt down heroes in defiance of the Registration Act, Captain America goes underground and forms a resistance movement.

As the two factions meet in combat at an abandoned chemical plant, the battlefield is sundered by a tremendous bolt of lightning, heralding the appearance of the mighty Thor!

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THOR?

THOR, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S ME, MAN. THE FALCON...
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? EVERYBODY THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
NO, DAGGER. THAT WOULD BE YOU.

OH MY GOD. THIS IS WRONG.
WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE. THIS IS REALLY, REALLY WRONG...
WRETCHES.
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE...

CAP, PLEASE. DON'T GET UP. I DON'T WANT TO HIT YOU AGAIN. YOUR JAW'S PRACTICALLY HANGING OFF.
JUST SURRENDER, AND I'LL GET YOU MEDICAL ATTENTION FROM THE S.H.I.E.L.D. PEOPLE OUT THERE.
YOU REALLY THINK I'M GOING DOWN--
--TO SOME PAMPERED PUNK LIKE YOU?
IRON MAN TO ALL POINTS: ACTIVATE YOUR AUDIO-BLOCKS.
THIS IS GOING TO HURT...
AAARGHH!

OH, LORD. THIS IS HORRIBLE. I CAN'T EVEN LOOK...
I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER, SUE, BUT AT LEAST THIS WAY THERE'S NO BROKEN BONES.
STAND DOWN, THOR. THE S.H.I.E.L.D. CLEANUP SQUAD CAN HANDLE THINGS FROM HERE.
YOU'RE A TOUGH OLD BIRD, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT. THIS FREQUENCY PUTS THE HUMAN BRAIN INTO SHUTDOWN, BUT LOOK AT YOU. YOU'RE STILL GETTING UP.
I'M SORRY, CAP. I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT QUICK. JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES AND YOU'LL WAKE UP IN OUR SUPER HERO DETENTION CENTER...
EMERGENCY ARMOR WARNING--
HUH?
NON-HUMAN ATTACK REGISTERED--

SOMEBODY SWITCHED IT OFF!
SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
UNGH!

FALCON! SEE TO CAPTAIN AMERICA! WE NEED TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE!
HALFWAY *THERE*, HERCULES.
CABLE, I NEED YOU TO INTERFACE WITH CLOAK'S MIND AND ACTIVATE A *TELEPORT*.
EVERYBODY ELSE CAN GATHER 'ROUND AND HITCH A RIDE BACK HOME.

OPEN FIRE!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
GET READY FOR THE SHORTEST COMEBACK IN HISTORY, THOR.
I DON'T THINK SO.

MY GOD...
THOR JUST KILLED GOLIATH.
FALL BACK AND REGROUP! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE OR WE'RE ALL GOING DOWN!
YOU ARE ALL GOING DOWN.

HUH?
GET OUT OF HERE.
NOW.

WHAT ABOUT OUR WOUNDED AND DOWNED? WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THEM BEHIND...
YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER, SON. EVERYBODY ELSE: FALL IN TIGHT. WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS...
SUSAN.
THANK YOU.
SHUTDOWN CODE "RICHARD WAGNER EIGHTEEN-THIRTEEN TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-THREE."

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED, REED? I THOUGHT YOU GAVE HIM SOME KIND OF DIRECTIVES! YOU SAID THIS GUY WOULD BE JUST LIKE THE OLD THOR!
SUE, PLEASE. YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE I HAD--
DON'T EVEN SPEAK TO ME. DON'T SAY A DAMN WORD.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING, TONY.
I THOUGHT WE WERE DOING THIS SO NO ONE ELSE GOT HURT.

AVENGERS TOWER.
YOU OKAY, HANK?
NO, SPIDER-MAN. I AM NOT OKAY. I JUST WATCHED A NEW SUPERHUMAN I HELPED CREATE BLOW A HOLE THROUGH ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS.
DO YOU REALLY THINK I'M SO REMOTE--SO DETACHED--THAT THIS WOULDN'T HAVE SOME KIND OF IMPACT ON ME?
I'M SORRY, PETER.
IT'S OKAY, JAN. TO BE HONEST, WE'RE ALL A LITTLE FREAKED OUT. THIS WASN'T EXACTLY WHAT ANY OF US SIGNED UP FOR.

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WE CLONED A GOD.
DID YOU KNOW TONY HAD BEEN HOLDING ONTO THAT STRAND OF THOR'S HAIR SINCE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE AVENGERS?
WHAT [redacted] OF MAN COMBS HIS FURNITURE FOR HAIR FOLLICLES AND SKIN CELLS?
A GUY WITH A LOT OF FORESIGHT, I GUESS.
I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY OUR THOR-CLONE KILLED A MAN. IS HE MISSING A HUMAN CONSCIENCE?
DO WE [redacted] TO FUSE HIM WITH A DONALD BLAKE OR A JAKE OLSON TO HAVE HIM FUNCTION PROPERLY?
DO YOU EVER WONDER IF WE'VE PICKED THE RIGHT SIDE HERE, HANK?

SECRET AVENGERS HEADQUARTERS:
APPEAL FOR AMNESTY? [illegible] YOU INSANE? WE JUST PICKED UP ANOTHER TWENTY SUPPORTERS, NIGHTHAWK. TONY'S PEOPLE ARE DISAPPEARING BY THE HOUR.
SO WHAT? BILL'S DEAD AND HALF OUR GUYS GOT THROWN IN THIS [illegible]UMBER FORTY-TWO COMPLEX...THIS BIG S.H.I.E.L.D. PENITENTIARY REED RICHARDS WAS BUILDING...
AND YOU'RE WILLING TO LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THAT, KYLE?
THE WAY I SEE IT, THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEY LIKE NOW THAT THEY GOT THOR ON-SIDE.
THAT WASN'T THOR. THAT WAS JUST [illegible] OF THOSE FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTERS THEY'VE [illegible] GROWING FOR THEIR SUP[illegible] HERO ARMY. YOU REALLY THINK THOR WOULD HAVE MURDERED BILL FOSTER?
HOLD STILL SO JANE AND I CAN FINISH, HUH?

BILL WAS DEAD THE SECOND HE THOUGHT HE WAS [redacted] THAN THE LAW, CAP.
C'MON, GUYS, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
WHAT YOU GONNA DO, KYLE? PULL ON THOSE NICE LITTLE JACKBOOTS AND SMACK WHOEVER THEY TELL YOU TO SMACK? [redacted] ARE SUPPOSED TO [redacted] VOLUNTEERS.
NO, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE GOOD GUYS, CAGE.
CASSIE?
I'M SORRY, KATE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO END UP IN THIS SUPER-JAIL LIKE WICCAN. I WANT TO FIGHT VILLAINS, NOT COPS AND OTHER SUPER HEROES.
LET THEM GO IF THEIR FREEDOM MEANS SO LITTLE TO THEM.
IT'S TIME [redacted] DITCHED THIS BASE FOR A [redacted] ANYWAY.
HE'S JUST ANOTHER OLD MAN [redacted] OF THE FUTURE, CASSIE.
WON'T BE HAPPY UNTIL THE WHOLE DAMN TEAM'S DEAD.

GOLIATH'S FUNERAL, NEW JERSEY:
HELL OF A SEND-OFF, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
GUY WAS A SUPER HERO, HAPPY, AND HE SAVED ▮ LOT OF LIVES OVER THE YEARS. THAT'S SOMETHING ▮ CAN'T FORGET NO MATTER *HOW* BAD THIS GETS.
JUST A SHAME THEY COULDN'T *SHRINK HIM DOWN.* ▮ WONDER HOW MUCH HIS *FAMILY* HAD TO SHELL OUT FOR THESE THIRTY-EIGHT *BURIAL PLOTS.*
NOTHING. I TOOK CARE OF ALL THE *EXPENSES.* IT WAS THE *LEAST* ▮ COULD DO...

...GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
HEADS UP, BOSS.
MISTER STARK?
MRS. SHARPE, I--
DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT HERE TO GIVE YOU A HARD TIME. I KNOW YOU GUYS HAVE LOST A LOT OF SUPPORT IN THE *SUPER HERO COMMUNITY* AND I JUST CAME BY TO SAY MY PIECE.
GOLIATH *KNEW* WHAT HE WAS DOING. HE WAS BREAKING A LAW DESIGNED TO SAVE PEOPLE'S *LIVES*.
IF HE'D ONLY GONE LEGITIMATE, HE'D STILL BE *ALIVE*. THIS IS NO MORE YOUR FAULT THAN A COP COULD BE BLAMED FOR SHOOTING A PUNK WHO PULLS A *GUN* ON HIM.
MRS. SHARPE...
SHH. I ALSO WANTED TO GIVE YOU *THIS*: MY SON DAMIEN'S FAVORITE TOY SINCE HE WAS THREE YEARS OLD...
...JUST TO REMIND YOU WHY YOU'RE *DOING* THIS.

IS IT JUST ME OR IS PETER PARKER ACTING VERY, VERY SUSPICIOUSLY?
My darling Reed...
I know Johnny's out of the hospital and the family's back together again. I know I should be happy, but I'm not.
I'm so ASHAMED of you right now, and ashamed of myself for supporting your fascistic plans. I hate what I've become, and that's why I'm joining Cap's SECRET AVENGERS team.
Please understand: This is not another cry for attention. This is not me trying to distract you from your all-important work.
This is because our hands are soaked in Bill Foster's BLOOD and you're so blinded by your graphs and social projections that you can't even SEE it.

Johnny and I will be working UNDERGROUND from now on, and that's obviously no place for Franklin and Valeria.
That's why I've left them in your care and beg you to give them the time you have so often DENIED them in the past.
I also didn't want your last memory of me to be tainted with all the blazing fights we've had in recent weeks.
Reed
Hence the oily-fish dinner (good brain-food), the bottle of your favorite claret (an excellent antioxidant) and making love one final time (good for the immune system).
I hope I don't look like a coward for leaving this way. I hope you don't think I'm a bad wife or, worse still, a bad mother.
I'm doing this for the best of reasons and pray that your genius can RESOLVE this thing before one side ends up slaughtering the other.
TORCH
I love you, Reed. More than anything in the world.
Please fix this.
Susan
XXX

AVENGERS TOWER:
SO HOW MANY OF OUR GUYS ARE WE LOSING?
MORE THAN WE CAN AFFORD. A COUPLE OF CAP'S PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT COMING OVER, BUT THE BALANCE HAS DEFINITELY TIPPED IN THEIR FAVOR AFTER THIS.
MAYBE WE COULD JUST BRING FORWARD THIS FIFTY STATE INITIATIVE THING. WOULDN'T THESE NEW HEROES BE ABLE TO GET THINGS UNDER CONTROL AGAIN?
YEAH, BUT THEY'RE STILL AT LEAST A MONTH AWAY FROM BEING FINISHED. WE NEED TO MOVE FAST AND WE NEED PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE IN SUPERHUMAN COMBAT...
YOU MEAN THIS LATEST ITERATION OF THE THUNDERBOLTS YOU'VE ASSEMBLED?
AFTER WHAT JUST WENT DOWN, IT'S THE ONLY COURSE OF ACTION WE'VE GOT LEFT, JAN.
I SHOULD STRESS THAT THEIR INVOLVEMENT IS STRICTLY TEMPORARY. THIS IS JUST TO CAPTURE CAP'S TEAM, AND THEY'LL ALL GO BACK TO JAIL IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS.
EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM WILL BE CHIPPED AND TAGGED, THEIR EVERY MOVEMENT MONITORED BY MICROSCOPIC NANOBOTS.
WELL, THEY DON'T EXACTLY LOOK THRILLED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF TEAMING UP WITH THE AVENGERS...

THAT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT *NICE* PEOPLE.
TO BE CONTINUED...